15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

797 185 231 beast represented a potential feast. Tailing stock, and protecting them from dingoes whilst they grazed, was a foreign idea to Stone Age hunters, and if they were not watched, they would build each day a rough brushwood yard in the bush to prevent the stock wandering off for grass and water. Meanwhile the herdsman slept in the shade, and at sundown he brought the animals back to the station yards.

797 [514] With two hundred nomads on the station, a simple system of sanitation was soon necessary. In the bush they never bother about this, for they live in small hordes, and camp in one place only long enough to eat the meagre food supply, and then move elsewhere. I have never seen Yulengor [515] deliberately wash themselves, but they are so often in the water after fish or crossing creeks and swamps, that they do sometimes get wet. Their cleansing agents are sand and ashes in which they sleep and lounge, and these are fairly effective in removing body moisture and dirt. The predominating acrid odour in their hair, dillybags, and shelters [147] comes mostly from the blinding smoke in which they cook, eat, and sleep.

797 29 177 Unfortunately most nomads take too readily to wearing left-off clothes. We did all we could to control the craze, and issued free soap and a yard of brightly coloured cloth to the men, and short skirts to the women. Our chief [296] objection to the use of clothing is that it is passed from one to another, never washed, and when wet is allowed to dry on the body, thereby causing colds and pneumonia. Bush Yulengor wear nothing unless it be an occasional piece of bark or bunch of leaves attached to a waist-string. But when traders and adventurers introduced coloured cloth, blankets, and left-off clothing, they were eagerly acquired as ornaments, passed from one to another, worn till they fell to pieces, and except for accidental immersion, were never washed. Strange clothes have been seen, as when a man was [439] seen in camp dressed in lady's floral Japanese pyjamas

15:Chaseling M-5 (ca. 1934-1936)1957
O117 Murngin O117

CHAPTER SIX

From Hand to Mouth

ABORIGINES have lived from hand to mouth for centuries, but it is a wonder that any human being can live in Arnhem Land and find enough to eat. Though the Reserve covers 34,000 square miles, an average white man would perish in it if he were not rescued by a Stone Age man. On the other hand an aboriginal family, isolated many miles from its hunting-grounds, can calmly grind hardwood into hunting spears and digging-sticks, make fire by twirling one stick against another, find water, erect a shelter to suit the weather conditions, and make a comfortable camp.

Iniji, an aboriginal boy of eleven years, was inadvertently abandoned on a barren island near Yirrkala when his horde divided forces and went away in their canoes. Iniji was deformed and had difficulty in hobbling, yet he kept himself alive for over a month by crawling along the beach for turtle eggs and shellfish. For moisture he manipulated long grass straws far under a low cliff face and sucked the only fresh water on the island.

Contrary to popular belief, aboriginal foods are mainly of vegetable origin, although they also eat animals, birds, fish, and reptiles. For countless centuries, Stone Age hunters have tested roots, yams, berries, animals, birds, fish, reptiles, and shellfish, and numerous deaths have resulted from poisoning, yet they have perfected methods of treatment. They have also evolved an astonishingly efficient digestive system, and also jaws and teeth that bend wire and small iron bars into spears, and nails into fish-hooks.

Most of the forty varieties of yams found in the Reserve